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**LORD INDRA**

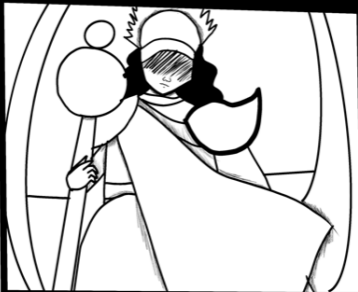
**LORD INDRA IS AN ANCIENT VEDIC DEITY. HE IS THE KING OF SWARGA (HEAVEN) AND THE RULER OF THE DEVAS (GODS) IN HINDUISM.**

**IN BUDDHISM, HE FEATURES AS A GUARDIAN DEITY AND IN JAINISM, AS THE KING OF THE FIRST HEAVEN CALLED SAUDHARMAKALPA. HE IS A POWERFUL CHARACTER IN INDIAN MYTHOLOGY AND HIS STORY IS OFTEN COMPARED TO THOSE OF INDO-EUROPEAN DEITIES SUCH AS ZEUS, PERUN, THOR AND JUPITER.**

INDRA FEATURES PROMINENTLY THROUGHOUT THE RIGVEDA, THE FIRST OF THE FOUR VEDAS. THE GOD OF THUNDER AND LIGHTNING, HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE THE POWER TO INVOKE STORMS, RAIN AND STRONG RIVER CURRENTS. THIS COMMANDING PERSONA IS BELIEVED TO HAVE SLAIN THE EVIL DEMON, VRITRA, WHO AIMED TO DESTROY THE PEACE AND HAPPINESS AMONG HUMAN BEINGS ON EARTH. BY KILLING THE ASURA, INDRA ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A FRIEND OF MANKIND AS A WHOLE; ALSO RESTORING PEACE, JOY AND SUNSHINE ON THIS PLANET.



**INDRA IS FEARFUL OF LOSING HIS THRONE  
AS MENTIONED EARLIER, INDRA ALWAYS HAD THE FEAR  
THAT HE WOULD ONE DAY END UP LOSING HIS THRONE  
TO SOMEONE MORE PIOUS AND POWERFUL. SO  
INSECURE WAS HE THAT HE WAS WILLING TO GO TO  
ANY LENGTHS TO STOP EARTHLINGS AND OTHER  
BEINGS FROM TAKING HIS POSITION. HE OFTEN  
DISTURBED THE PENANCE OF SAGES AND TESTED  
PEOPLE TO THE LIMIT, JUST TO SEE THEM FAIL IN THEIR  
LIVES' MISSION. HERE IS ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW HE  
TRIED TO BREAK A SAGE'S PENANCE AND BRING HIM  
DOWN FROM HIS SPIRITUAL HEIGHTS:**



**THERE WAS ONCE A KING NAMED  
KAUSHIKA. HE WAS STRONG AND WISE  
AND A MIGHTY RULER. LOVED BY HIS  
SUBJECTS AND FEARED BY HIS ENEMIES,  
HIS TRUE GLORY UNFOLDED NOT IN  
HIS VICTORY, BUT IN HIS UTTER DEFEAT  
AND HUMILIATION.**





HE AND HIS ARMIES WERE ONCE HOSTED BY SAGE VASISTHA. VASISTHA OWNED A DIVINE COW, NAMED KAMADHENU. AS THE NAME SUGGESTED, THE COW HAD THE ABILITY TO GRANT ANYTHING THAT ITS OWNER WANTED. NOW, KAUSHIKA WANTED KAMADHENU FOR HIMSELF. HE ASKED VASISTHA TO GIVE IT TO HIM, BUT THE SAGE REFUSED TO DO SO. HE THEN TRIED TO TAKE IT BY FORCE. WHEN HE TRIED TO ATTACK VASISTHA, THE LATTER TURNED HIS MASSIVE ARMY TO ASHES; THEREBY DEFEATING HIM ENTIRELY.

**KAUSHIKA REALIZED THAT HE  
WAS NO MATCH FOR  
VASISTHA'S SPIRITUAL POWER.  
HE KNEW THAT, IN ORDER TO  
ATTAIN THAT KIND OF POWER,  
HE WOULD HAVE TO  
UNDERTAKE GREAT PENANCE TO  
PLEASE AND APPEASE THE  
DEVAS. HE GAVE UP ALL HIS  
ROYAL COMFORTS AND  
JOURNEYED DEEP INTO THE  
FOREST. THERE, HE BEGAN HIS  
INTENSE TAPAS (PENANCE),  
WHICH LASTED SEVERAL YEARS.**



**AS TIME PASSED, KAUSHIKA GOT MORE SPIRITUALLY POWERFUL AND INDRA GOT MORE AND MORE UNCOMFORTABLE. INDRA FEARED THAT, IF THE KING CONTINUED AT THIS PACE, HE WOULD SOON BECOME MIGHTY ENOUGH TO TAKE CHARGE OF INDRALOKA. SO HE DEVISED A PLAN TO DISTRACT KAUSHIKA FROM HIS PENANCE.**





**INDRA SENT ONE OF HIS MOST BEAUTIFUL APSARAS (CELESTIAL DANCERS), MENAKA, TO TEMPT KAUSHIKA AND DISTRACT HIM FROM HIS TAPAS. MENAKA CAME DOWN TO EARTH AND STARTED TO SING AND DANCE IN FRONT OF THE KING. INITIALLY, HE RESISTED AND GAVE HER A GOOD FIGHT. HE REFUSED TO LOOK AT HER AND CONTINUED ON WITH HIS PENANCE. SHE FAILED SEVERAL TIMES, BUT NEVER GAVE UP TRYING.**



ONE FINE DAY, HE FINALLY GAVE IN TO HER CHARMS AND FELL DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH HER. KAUSHIKA AND MENAKA LIVED HAPPILY IN THE FOREST FOR SOME TIME. IN DUE COURSE OF TIME, THEY HAD A DAUGHTER NAMED SHAKUNTALA. EVENTUALLY, KAUSHIKA BECAME AWARE OF INDRA'S PLOT AND HOW MENAKA WAS SENT DOWN ONLY TO DISTRACT HIM. WITHOUT SECOND THOUGHT, HE COMPLETELY REJECTED MENAKA AND RETURNED TO HIS TAPAS WITH MORE FERVOR THAN EVER BEFORE.